

STATEMENT BY MR. B.K. HARIPRASAD, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 67 – ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND AGENDA ITEM 68 – RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 02, 2009



Mr. Chairman,

I would like to start by thanking the UN Secretary General for his reports under the agenda items dealing with racism and racial discrimination and rights of peoples to self-determination.

My thanks are also due to the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerance, and the Chairperson of the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries as a Means of Impeding the Exercise of Rights of People to Self Determination, for their statements to the Committee.

My delegation associates itself with statement made by the Chair of the G-77.

Mr. Chairman,

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, had experienced the full force of discrimination based on colour during his nearly two decade long stay in South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century even before his return to India to lead our struggle for independence.

Moreover, as a country that was under colonial rule for nearly two centuries, Indians were well acquainted with the abhorrent facts of racism and racial discrimination.

Very conscious of the destructive impact that racism and racial discrimination can have on society, the leaders of our freedom struggle ensured that the Constitution of India, even in its preamble, enshrined the basic value of equality.

Article 14 of our Constitution further-on clearly states that the State shall not deny to any person equality before law. This encompasses equality of opportunity as well as equality of status. And then we have Article 15 which expressly prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth. These two articles are a mere reflection of the fundamental principles and values that are an integral part of the fabric that binds a diverse country like India, together.

While the Constitution of India is the foundation of our legal and political system, India's independent judiciary has been in the forefront in safeguarding these rights for all our citizens. These rights are also reinforced by a free and vibrant media and vocal civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

The fight against racism and efforts to rid the world of racial discrimination and colonization were, therefore, obviously a corner-stone of our foreign policy after independence. In pursuing such objectives we were also guided by the fact that several

parts of the globe were still under colonial rule and the most despicable of all forms of racial discrimination, apartheid, was on an ascendant in South Africa.

At the UN, our delegation took the lead in drafting the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and we are proud that distinguished Indians have served on the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We naturally support national and international measures that must be undertaken to combat racism. We share the concern of other countries and of the General Assembly that expressed alarm at the increase in the number of racist incidents in several countries.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the outcome of the Durban Review Conference which was held in April this year. This outcome made an assessment of the effectiveness of the existing Durban follow-up mechanisms and other UN mechanisms dealing with racism and racial discrimination. It also assessed the efforts that have been made to promote the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the sharing of best practices. It is important that the focus of these efforts remain on addressing the abhorrent issues of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance as specified in its mandate. We would like to reiterate our firm commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and seek to create more effective measures to enhance its effective implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

India has been an active supporter of the Palestinian people's right to self determination and realization of their inalienable rights. We remain committed to Palestine and will continue to do all within our capacity to assist the Palestinian people in building their capacities and institutions.

India believes that the solution to the Palestine issue should be based on the relevant UN Resolutions, the Arab Peace Plan and the Quartet Roadmap resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel.

Mr. Chairman,

The right to self determination is sacrosanct and must be considered as a fundamental right for people of non self governing territories and trust colonies. This is a right that allows people to freely establish their governance structures and participate in national democratic processes and institutions.

At the same time, the right to self determination cannot be used towards subversive political agendas. The international community has always agreed that this right cannot be extended to component parts or groups based on ethnic, religious or other such narrow lines, within an independent sovereign state. Any attempts to erode the territorial integrity of a Member State, is in fact an attack on the fundamental principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

We regret the unacceptable reference made by the delegation of Pakistan to the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. I would like to reiterate that the Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of the Union of India and its people regularly participate in free, fair and open elections. Pakistan would be well advised to concentrate its focus on combating terrorism and not allowing the use of its territory by terrorists and their infrastructure. Pakistan has already been advised that they should take credible action against terrorists and their support base. This is necessary to create conditions for meaningful dialogue. I would also like to request the Pakistani delegation not to use this forum to sow detraction in support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Mr. Chairman,

For all of us in independent countries, nothing has a more empowering ring than the right to elect representatives, whether for national Parliaments, or for State legislatures or institutions of local self-governance. The exercise of this right, single-handedly, gives every citizen the most unique power to influence the course of the government in his or her country.

As the largest democracy in the world, we in India are, indeed, proud of our democratic traditions. This year we elected our 15th Lok Sabha, i.e., the Lower House of the Parliament. This enormous exercise involved more than 700 million voters exercising their franchise to elect 543 Members of Parliament.

Mr. Chairman,

Mahatma Gandhi once said "*You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty*".

The task ahead of us is long and challenging but we must firmly believe in the goodness of the human race. Equality and peace are fundamental to our existence. We should jointly purge the world of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory practices and

facilitate the legitimate right of self determination for nations seeking freedom. We must use this opportunity wisely to rid the vast ocean of the drops of dirty water.

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